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C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 002428

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STATE FOR EAP/MLS; PARIS PASS USMISSION UNESCO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/13/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [TH](#) [CB](#)

SUBJECT: THAI-CAMBODIAN DISPUTE OVER PREAH VIHEAR:
BILATERAL MEETINGS AIM TO DEFUSE TENSIONS

REF: STATE 78884

Classified By: DCM James F. Entwistle, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary and Comment: Meetings between Thai and Cambodian regional military commanders in Thailand's Surin Province August 13 and between Foreign Ministers planned August 18-19 in Hua Hin indicate bilateral efforts to reduce tensions in the spat over the territory near the Khmer Preah Vihear temple are underway. We continue to believe that the Preah Vihear dispute is one best solved bilaterally by Thailand and Cambodia within the framework of the 2000 Thai-Cambodian Memorandum of Understanding To Survey and Demarcate the Land Boundary (MOU), and do not recommend additional U.S. steps, beyond our current position of urging both sides to exercise restraint and work together to reach a compromise (reftel). End Summary and Comment.

First Military Regional Commanders...

¶2. (U) Thailand's Second Army Area Commanding General LTG Suchit Sitthiprapha hosted his Cambodian counterpart, 4th Region Commanding General LTG Temon, August 13 in Surin Province; the intended focus of the meeting was the repositioning of troops from the contested border area adjacent to the Preah Vihear temple, according to press reports. Suchit and Temon issued a joint statement mid-day, agreeing that both sides would reduce the number of soldiers near the temple to an equal number in the near future, without providing further details of how many and when.

...to be followed by Foreign Ministers

¶3. (SBU) Thai FM Tej Bunnag will host his Cambodian counterpart Hor Namhong in Hua Hin August 18-19 to advance diplomatic efforts to address the dispute. The Thai MFA's East Asia division told us that the focus of the meetings would be on two issues of immediate concern: redeployment by both sides of troops still essentially co-located in the disputed area, and the issuance of documents to be used as common terms of reference by both sides. These documents would facilitate further discussion at technical levels (i.e., within the Joint Boundary Commission). FM Tej would confirm at the August 18-19 meetings that border disputes between Thailand and Cambodia should be solved amicably and peacefully by the two countries, according to the MFA.

JOHN